

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 22939

E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: OREP, SREF, TH
SUBJ: STAFFDEL TINKER: THAI REFUGEE PROBLEM

1. ON AUGUST 9 SENATE JUSTICE STAFFDEL TINKER AND DCM
PAID A COURTESY CALL ON ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER WONG.
TINKER USED OCCASION TO EXPRESS THE CONTINUING INTEREST
OF SENATOR KENNEDY IN THE REFUGEE PROBLEM AS WELL AS
CONVEYING APPRECIATION FOR THE PRESENT CONSTRUCTIVE RTG
POLICY ACCEPTING REFUGEES. TINKER ALSO TOUCHED ON
QUESTION OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THAILAND.

2. IN RESPONSE WONG NOTED THAT RTG HAS BEEN GIVING SERIOUS
CONSIDERATION TO THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. THE RTG WILL MAINTAIN
ITS POLICY OF ACCEPTING REFUGEES AND IS DEEPLY APPRECIATIVE
OF THE USG DECISION TO ACCEPT 25,000 INDO-CHINESE REFUGEES
OVER THE NEXT YEAR. HOWEVER HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE
USG WOULD CONSIDER A LONG TERM PROGRAM TAKING SIGNIFICANT
NUMBERS OF REFUGEES OUT OF THAILAND OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS.
WONG SAID THAT CABINET THIS WEEK HAD DISCUSSED REFUGEE
POLICY AND THE RTG WAS MOVING TOWARDS CONSIDERATION OF
SOME EVENTUAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM. HOWEVER, IN
ORDER FOR THE RTG TO ACTIVELY PLAN A LONGER TERM REFUGEE
PROGRAM WONG SAID IT IS NECESSARY TO HAVE SOME IDEA OF HOW
MANY REFUGEES WILL BE TAKEN OUT OF THE COUNTRY ANNUALLY
BY THE US AND OTHER COUNTRIES.

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3. TINKER AND DCM GAVE BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF STATE OF PLAY
WITH REGARD TO A LONG TERM PROGRAM. TINKER INDICATED THAT
THERE WILL PROBABLY BE LEGISLATION INTRODUCED NEXT YEAR.
TINKER ALSO SAID THAT OVER TIME THE NUMBER OF INCREASE
SUBSTANTIALLY AS NEW REFUGEES IN THE US RECEIVE US
CITIZENSHIP AND CONFER A PREFERENCE STATUS ON

RELATIVES NOW IN THE CAMPS. TINKER ASKED WONG WHETHER RTG WAS STUDYING REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION IN A CONCRETE FASHION AND WONG ASSURED HIM THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS SYSTEMATICALLY APPROACHING QUESTION OF SOME EVENTUAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM IN THAILAND WITH ASSISTANCE FROM USG AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS.

4. COMMENT: IN THE PAST WEEK RTG SENIOR OFFICERS HAVE BEEN FOCUSING ON RESETTLEMENT QUESTION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF BROADER REFUGEE POLICY. IN THAT REGARD, IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT RTG MAY IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS BE SURFACING SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF THE TWO MILLION DOLLARS ORIGINALLY OFFERED BY THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR A FEASIBILITY STUDY AND/OR PILOT RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS. HOWEVER, AS NOTED ABOVE THE RTG FOCUS IS STILL ON THE NEED FOR CONTINUING ACCEPTANCE PROGRAMS BY OTHER COUNTRIES AND THERE ARE INTERNAL BUREAUCRATIC DIFFERENCES ON BASIC QUESTION OF RESETTLEMENT, AS WELL AS THE PROPER APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM.

5. WE WILL BE IN CONTINUING CONTACT WITH SENIOR RTG OFFICERS ON THIS AND EXPECT TO HAVE A BETTER PICTURE OF RTG THINKING SHORTLY. ABRAMOWITZ

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